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Chicago, Illinois

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

by

Essex Dane

When The Whirlwind Blows

WALTER H. BAKER CO., BOSTON
Publishers

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By

ESSEX DANE

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When the Whirlwind Blows

CHARACTERS

MADAME ELIZABETH ANDROYA, *Wife of General Androya, of the Army of the regular Government.*

JOSEFA, *Mother of Oswald, a blacksmith and a member of the Workmen's Council, set up in the district.*

ANNA, *Lately lady's maid to Madame Androya.*

SCENE.—A district in any European country in the throes of political and labor struggles and upheavals. JOSEFA's house, situated in the country, near a town of minor importance.

N. B. The personalities of the three women should be as plainly marked as possible, according to the descriptions given.

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When the Whirlwind Blows

SCENE.—*A roughly furnished room, in the house of* JOSEFA, *the mother of* OSWALD, *a blacksmith; the furniture is of plain, unpainted wood. A table is just off* C. R. *At back,* C. L., *a long, low window, fitted with iron bars, stands in a shallow recess. Rough dark curtains hang on either side of the window recess—and draw, to be shut off, as required. In corner,* R. *at back, obliqued against the wall, is a bench with a washtub on it. On the wall, near it, hangs a wood-chopper. A rough fireplace,* L. I E., *with a wood-fire burning on the hearth. Over fireplace hangs a common smallish mirror, at eye-level. A lamp in a bracket hangs against the wall above fireplace. A door* C. *back, between window and washtub, leads outside. This door has practicable lock and key. Hanging by this door is an old-fashioned lantern, the door of which is open, owing to a broken catch. In it is seen a short length of candle, too small for the socket, and which, consequently, droops over to one side. A chair stands above fireplace, and another chair* L. *of table. A door* R. U. E. *which leads to* JOSEFA'S *bedroom.*

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(*When the curtain rises, the room is in semi-darkness; it is late afternoon in winter and the light is almost gone.* JOSEFA, *a powerfully built woman of peasant type, about forty, is working at the washtub. After a moment she stops, draws her hand across her forehead as if weary, goes to window and looks up and down as if expecting someone. Then she goes to the fire, thrusts a long taper in it, and proceeds to light up the lamp on the wall, and then goes to the lantern. She lights the candle inside, which she tries to set up straight in the socket, but it resists her efforts, and droops over as before. There is a knock on the window.* JOSEFA *has returned to the washtub. She raises her head; her listless manner changes completely. She runs back eagerly to window, and looks out towards the door, tearing off her rough apron. She hurries to door, and opens it all joyous expectancy. Then, as a woman's figure appears in the doorway, she draws back, disappointed.*)

JOSEFA. Oh—it's *you.*

(*The woman in the doorway is about twenty-five, good looking and robust. She is smart, wears town clothes, and exudes an excellent opinion of herself. She is carrying a large bundle, and a hand-bag.*)

ANNA (*excited and breathless, and giving the impression that she has been running*). Josefa ——

(JOSEFA *turns away.* ANNA *stops suddenly.*) What's the matter?

Jos. I thought it was my son. Come in.

(JOSEFA *returns to the tub.*)

ANNA (*enters, puts her heavy bundle on the table, and then closes and locks the door. She goes on talking breathlessly as she does so*). Josefa, do you want to hear the news? Things are going to happen to-night! The people are ordered to gather at General Androya's house. Our men are to attack it and burn it down.

Jos. (*stopping her work, keenly interested*). How do you know?

ANNA. It's true. The Workmen's Council gave the order at eleven o'clock this morning.

(*She sets her bundle down on the table.*)

Jos. (*keenly interested, comes forward drying her arms*). Who told you?

ANNA. Someone who heard the order given. The workmen are furious at the shooting of Lerner and Vassily. They say General Androya has spies among our own people. The house will be burned, and the goods and furniture distributed.

Jos. And the General's wife? She's there alone. What will become of Elizabeth Androya?

ANNA (*callously*). She'll have to take what's coming—unless she has been warned. An orderly from General Androya arrived to-day.

Jos. (*knowing her* ANNA). What did you hear?

(*She kneels on chair, leaning over.*)

ANNA (*looks up, then smiles cunningly*). Yes—I did happen to be in the next room at the time, but that steward of hers was creeping about as usual. I discovered the cause of all Madame Androya's driving about after dark. The General told her to find out who would be loyal and support his Government troops when he brings them.

JOS. (*bitterly*). Stirring up our enemies!

ANNA. Stirring them up! She has been arming them.

JOS. (*springing up enraged*). What!

ANNA. I've seen the guns and cartridge boxes piled up in the steward's room each day, and at night, after her carriage left, they would be gone. She told the messenger to-day, she has a list of names of all the people in the district they can count on. She's planned to join the General to-morrow, (*Slowly and vindictively.*) but to-night, they'll burn her fine house. (*With meaning.*) I don't think Elizabeth Androya will ever need a lady's maid again. (JOSEFA *clasping her elbows, walks thoughtfully down* R. ANNA *excitedly undoes her bundle.*) Josefa, I've got ahead of everyone, thanks to superior information.

JOS. (*absorbed in her own thoughts*). Did you catch sight of that list of names?

ANNA. She kept it too close.

JOS. And now she's sent it away.

ANNA (*busy with her bundle*). Oh, no, I heard her say: "Tell the General I have many converts; I'll bring the list, completed, when I meet his escort at," and then (*Viciously.*)—and then that damned old steward came in, and I had to move away.

Jos. (*her back to* Anna). Was my son at the Council Meeting?

Anna (*gives a sharp sidelong look at* Josefa, *before answering, then, carelessly*). I didn't hear. (*She has spread out the things from the bundle, and turns the conversation.*) Look! My information was useful. Much I should have got, if I hadn't helped myself! A foreign lady's maid. (*Displaying the things.*) Silk skirts and stockings, furs, Paris hats. Even if she has the luck to escape, she wouldn't dare claim them now there are no courts to appeal to. (*She glances apprehensively at the door.*) Mind! You must hide me, if anyone comes. I didn't dare slip off till it was dark; that steward of hers disliked me; he crept about softly, he might have followed me. (*She spreads out her hands, offering* Josefa *her choice.*) Choose what you like.

Jos. (*still preoccupied, not noticing her*). Does Oswald know you are going away?

Anna. I haven't seen him, I tell you. Come, don't you want something?

(Josefa's *stolid manner breaks down utterly.*)

Jos. (*in a burst of feeling*). Oh, Anna, I'm afraid—I'm afraid!

Anna (*sharply*). What are you afraid about?

Jos. Oswald.

Anna (*indifferently*). Oh, that.

Jos. He has not been near his home for two weeks. There's something wrong. Aren't you afraid, too, his sweetheart?

Anna. Certainly not. He's safe enough.

Jos. Suppose they should have discovered it was he who threw the bombs!

Anna. They can't have done so. There's the notice still hanging on the post-office: "Reward for the apprehension of the perpetrator of the explosion of the Imperial Bank." It was there this morning.

Jos. (*unconvinced*). He must be afraid, or he wouldn't stay away. All those deaths on the head of a lad of twenty! It wasn't work to give a boy!

Anna (*much more interested in her finery*). You should be proud he was picked out for it.

Jos. It was cruel of the Council to set a boy to do it. I'll never forget his face when he told me. I can't sleep for fear. And you, his sweetheart ——

Anna. He's probably having a good time. I know these fellows, when they're off duty. He's all right.

Jos. They got Anton Vassily, didn't they! And there was George Lerner, for the train wreck. He was shot, and under ground three weeks before his people knew a word of it! They're getting information somehow. (*Fiercely.*) If you had stolen that list of Elizabeth Androya's, you'd have served us all. It's got to come. They could stamp out everyone who won't stand by us, and make an end. The Council would pay anything for that list of names, but no, you must take trash like this.

(*She gives the things an angry push.*)

Anna (*indignantly*). Trash! Trash, you say? (*Her voice rises triumphantly. She feels quickly in her pocket.*) Look! (*She draws from her pocket a large silk handkerchief, unknots it, and holds up a*

rope of pearls, and another, and another.) "Trash" you called them!

Jos. (*taking a step back*). The pearls! You dared! The Androya pearls!

ANNA. Why not? They'll sack the house tonight. The case was in her big armoire. I picked it with embroidery scissors. That trick I learned in my last situation. Someone in Paris. (*Chuckling to herself.*) He was a clever devil!

(*She puts them in the bosom of her dress.*)

Jos. You could have had your pearls, and everything else. They wouldn't have asked questions, when they'd done with the people on that list of Elizabeth Androya's.

ANNA (*a note of real terror in her voice*). No thank you! I'm city-bred—I can't stand it. I haven't forgotten last time! Screams and shots all night, and in the morning, things lying in the gutters —— (*She breaks off.*) I hate the beasts! (*Fiercely.*) I'm going back to Vienna till it's *over.* (*There is a knock on the door. They both start—look at the door, then at each other.* ANNA *nervous and unstrung.*) There! Who's that! (*She throws the things together hurriedly.*) You must hide me.

(*She picks up the bundle in her arms.*)

Jos. (*with hope in her voice*). Perhaps it's Oswald. Get out of sight till I see. (ANNA *goes to the window recess. As she moves, she lets fall a small bag; it drops with a sharp metallic sound.* JOSEFA *picks it up.*) What's this? (*She shakes it.*) *Gold* money? (*Amazement in her voice.*)

ANNA (*seeing it and snatching it*). Mine. My savings.

Jos. (*astonished*). All that! Why, there must be ——

ANNA (*closing the curtains as she disappears behind them*). Quick, answer the door.

(JOSEFA *looks after her for a moment, then goes to the door and speaks without opening it.*)

Jos. Who's there?

A WOMAN'S VOICE (*off stage*). It is I, Josefa; Madame Androya.

(ANNA *parts the curtains;* JOSEFA *turns, they look at each other.*)

Jos. (*in a whisper*). Did you hear? It's she. Elizabeth Androya. (ANNA *nods.*) What can she want?

ANNA (*softly*). Ask her.

Jos. (*aloud*). What do you want?

MME. A. My horse has gone lame.

(JOSEFA *looks over at* ANNA, *who gives a sigh of relief.*)

Jos. She's running away.

ANNA. Is she alone? Ask.

Jos. You look out. See who's driving her.

ANNA (*disappears through the curtains, then reappears*). There is a carriage on the road, but no one with it. She's alone. (*Another knock.*)

Jos. (*aloud*). A minute, wait one minute. (*Under her breath to* ANNA.) I've got to let her

in. (ANNA *mutely protests.*) Oh—you'll wriggle through somehow.

(ANNA *disappears behind the curtains, as* JOSEFA *unfastens the door.* MADAME ANDROYA *stands outside. She is a fragile, petite woman, pretty and distinguished, with all the marks of breeding and race. She wears a handsome cloak, hat, and lace veil.*)

MME. A. Didn't you recognize my voice? I'm going some distance. One of the horse's shoes is off.

JOS. My son is not at home.

(*At* JOSEFA'S *words,* MME. ANDROYA *looks at her quickly, with a slight start.*)

MME. A. Your—son?

JOS. (*shortly*). Been away over a fortnight. Business, for the Workmen's Council.

MME. A. (*as if slightly embarrassed*). Oh, yes—of course. (*She hesitates as if about to say something, then changes her mind.*) Will you see to the shoe for me? You can do it just as well.

JOS. (*sullenly*). It's not my work.

MME. A. (*with perfect good humor*). We're all doing other people's work, and our own, too, in these times. May I sit by your fire? (*She is carrying a valise, and now puts it down on the floor by the table; then turns to the small mirror over the fireplace, puts her veil back and arranges her hat. As she is doing so,* ANNA'S *face appears between the curtains.* JOSEFA *is down* R. *facing curtains.* ANNA *points at the valise* MME. ANDROYA *has put down.* JOSEFA *stares at her, then goes to door* C. R. *and*

opens it. MME. ANDROYA, *looking in the mirror, sees* ANNA'S *face emerge from the curtains and the byplay between the two women. She stands motionless watching them through the mirror, then goes on arranging her veil as if she had seen nothing.* JOSEFA *goes out, closing the door.* MME. ANDROYA *stands, without turning, looking down at the fire.* MME. ANDROYA, *after a brief pause, without moving.*) Come out. (*Nothing happens.* MME. ANDROYA *with her eyes on the mirror.*) I know you are there. Come out. (ANNA *slowly and sheepishly emerges;* MME. ANDROYA *turns, coolly surveying her discomfiture.*) Well . . . well! This is the last place I should have expected to find you! I admire your—audacity! I won't say anything that might embarrass you. Perhaps, though, you won't mind answering a question or two concerning ——

ANNA (*quickly recovering her bold front*). Not unless I choose!

MME. A. I realize how uncomfortable you feel, in my presence. Running with the hare and hunting with the hounds is risky! Quite a few things you picked up in your hurry, too —— (ANNA *eyes her silently.*) After all—they are mine—and they can't be far away, so —— (*Her eyes wander round the room.*) Ah, well, those don't matter. What I want—and mean to have, are probably in your pocket. Strings of pearls, valued at many thousands.

ANNA (*protesting fiercely*). You'll have to prove it. I never touched them! You can't take characters away like that!

MME. A. Oh! You never touched them. Am I to understand that you deny ——?

ANNA. Of course I deny. If you have been robbed of your pearls, anybody might have taken them. There is to be no more private property, everybody knows that!

MME. A. Hardly worth while stealing, then! Of course, if you deny, absolutely —— (*She stops short suddenly; her eyes are fixed upon something on the ground at her feet. She says suddenly.*) Then, what's this doing here? (*She stoops and picks up something.*) A diamond clasp, and two pearls. (*She turns on* ANNA.) Is this the way you take care of —— (ANNA *has apprehensively clasped her hand to her dress where she thrust the handkerchief containing the pearls.*) Ah—thank you. You have got them. I wanted to be sure. (*Opens her hand.*) There are no pearls there.

ANNA (*defying her*). What's the use of making trouble? They would be taken from you, anyhow. You didn't work for them, you didn't even buy them; you just ——

MME. A. (*impatiently*). Oh, please, please—I know the jargon so well. You all parrot the same words. People have been saying them since a few hundreds of years B. C.—and no one has made it work, yet! You've picked it up fast. You knew nothing of it when Josefa brought you to me, a starved, shivering refugee from Vienna, and begged me to employ you.

ANNA (*blustering*). Elizabeth Androya—I advise you to be respectful. It's safer in this district!

MME. A. Elizabeth—Eliz —— (*She laughs*

outright.) It does sound so odd! I realize I must get used to it—but from *you* ——!

ANNA. Only the workers count. To-day, I'm as good as you.

MME. A. (*unperturbed*). That's the question. Are you? I don't admit it. During the war we needed supervisors in the munitions works. You were put in charge of twenty women. You proved yourself unreliable, inefficient, a petty tyrant. The women would not obey you. You had your chance, and failed. Therefore I contest your assertion that you are as good as I am.

ANNA (*stubbornly*). I mean, there are no masters and servants.

MME. A. (*with delightful good humor*). You know, Anna, you are talking like a cheap and nasty yellow journal. There will always be masters and servants—whatever you call them. You—are a typical "servant"—though, of course, *you* don't *think* so.

ANNA. If I had your money, I'd be a lady.

MME. A. (*quietly*). If you had fifty thousand a year, and I were your sewing-woman, you would feel just as uneasy—just as clumsy and awkward in my presence as you do now—though, of course, you would be wearing my pearls *out*side your dress.

ANNA (*staring, and unable to understand* MME. ANDROYA'S *refusal to be annoyed*). I don't know what you're talking about!

MME. A. (*sweetly*). Of course not. You have a servant's mind. (JOSEFA *reënters.* MME. ANDROYA *turns quickly.*) Well?

JOS. (*sulkily*). Your horse can't be shod.

MME. A. (*surprised*). Why not?

JOS. There's a great wound in its leg.

MME. A. (*rising, astonished*). Surely you're mistaken! I examined it just now; there was nothing wrong then!

JOS. Look for yourself, if you don't believe it.

MME. A. (*a keen glance at her*). I will. (*She looks at the window, which is now dark.*) May I have a light? (JOSEFA *takes down the lantern and hands it to her.*)—and some water; and —— (*She hesitates and looks at the valise.*) I'll take the valise; there's linen in it.

(*She goes towards it, but* JOSEFA *intercepts her.*)

JOS. I'll get you rags and water, never mind the valise.

MME. A. I won't trouble you, I ——

JOS. What are you afraid of?

MME. A. Not you, Josefa, but ——

(*She glances at* ANNA.)

JOS. This is *my* house. *I'll* look after the valise.

MME. A. (*quietly, after a second's hesitation*). Very well.

(*She takes some rags which* JOSEFA *holds out, and goes out* C. *door.* JOSEFA *closes the door after her and stands, thinking.*)

ANNA (*who has been watching, directly* MME. ANDROYA *is off, speaks eagerly*). Did you see that? Did you see how anxious she was not to leave it?

She couldn't insist—it would have looked too suspicious. Here's the chance you wanted, dropped right in your lap.

Jos. (*only half listening*). What are you talking about?

Anna. Don't pretend it's not in your mind. That list of names you wanted to get hold of is there, in that valise. (*Pointing.*) It must be, or why should she be anxious not to leave it?

Jos. I wish the fool hadn't come here!

Anna (*viciously*). I wish it too! I wish she'd stopped at home, to meet the guests who are coming! (*She goes over to* Josefa.) Listen! Are you going to tell her what is to happen to-night?

Jos. (*troubled*). I don't know.

Anna. Why should you? There's no need! Her horse can't go on; she'll have to return and get another. That'll stop her making trouble about these (*She draws the pearls half out of her dress.*) —forever. You shall get your share. Isn't she one of the class we want to wipe out?

Jos. (*irresolute*). There's an ugly death for everyone whose name is on that paper. Elizabeth Androya is not a bad woman ——

Anna. They're all alike. Some big robber steals from a little robber. Then he sits quiet and hopes no one will notice. And in fifty years they're talking about "Divine Rights." Wasn't it her husband, General Androya, who had Lerner, and Vassily, and the others, shot?

Jos. (*savagely*). On whose information—God! I'd like to know!

Anna (*close to her*). They're all on that list of

hers. Every traitor in the district. A bit of leather and metal between you and it, and you're afraid!

Jos. (*looking at the valise*). It will be locked.

(ANNA *puts her hand on her arm.*)

ANNA. Josefa—it was *you* who injured her horse. (JOSEFA *shakes off* ANNA'S *arm, goes to the valise, kneels, and examines it.* ANNA *follows her up and puts her hand on* JOSEFA'S *shoulder.*) It was you.

(JOSEFA *lifts her head, looks straight in front of her, then says, shortly.*)

Jos. Yes.

ANNA (*eagerly*). What did you do?

Jos. Drove a knife through the foreleg.

ANNA. And you're blowing hot and cold! Here's the chance to do something. We can make her give up this paper. Our men will be masters here in a few hours. Elizabeth Androya's house will be burning. You're crazy! The woman's absolutely at our mercy. What are you afraid of?

(JOSEFA *has risen from her knees and is standing irresolute.* MME. ANDROYA *opens the door,* C., *and speaks as she enters.*)

MME. A. You're right—it *is* a bad wound — (*The two women, who are standing over the valise, move away slightly, in opposite directions.* MME. ANDROYA *notes the movement, and glances sharply*

from them to the valise.)—though how it happened, is a mystery. (*As she sets the lantern on the table,* JOSEFA'S *and* ANNA'S *eyes meet. Then* JOSEFA *goes quietly round to the door,* C. *back, locks it, withdraws the key, and slips it in her pocket, unseen by* MME. ANDROYA.) I must return on foot for another horse. Meanwhile there are things here which belong to me. (*To* ANNA, *sharply.*) Come—my pearls.

ANNA (*facing her boldly*). You let that drop! We'll have that out before the Council.

MME. A. When you're half-way to Vienna! You won't get more than half-way—the Government troops are holding the frontier. We can trace you. (ANNA *glares at her, defying her.*) Very well, physical force is not my metier. (*She turns to* JOSEFA.) I hold you responsible for this woman till my return. (*She stoops to take up the valise.*)

JOS. (*stopping her*). You can't carry that with you.

MME. A. Oh, yes.

JOS. It's too heavy; you need to make haste.

MME. A. There's very little inside.

JOS. Leave it. It will be safe enough. Pick it up as you go by.

MME. A. Not necessary.

JOS. Nonsense. People like you don't carry baggage about!

MME. A. (*looking at her steadily*). You are very insistent! Is there something that you ought to tell me?

JOS. (*roughly*). I don't care what you do.

MME. A. But you do know something. What

is it? (JOSEFA *avoids* MME. ANDROYA'S *eyes and is silent.*) Then I'll start. Give me my valise.

JOS. (*who is standing in front of it*). No. (MME. ANDROYA *looks at her, amazed.*) You take good advice. Go now at once. Never mind your belongings. Never mind anything else, get away.

MME. A. (*quietly facing her*). You're behaving very strangely, Josefa!

JOS. (*aggressively*). Then why should you mistrust me? Do you think I want to steal it?

MME. A. (*with a twinkle in her eye as she glances at* ANNA). You choose very queer company.

JOS. I'll lock it up for safety. I'll take it to my own room. Will *that* satisfy you? (*She snatches the valise without waiting for a reply.* MME. ANDROYA *shrugs her shoulders, in protesting acquiescence.* JOSEFA *calls to* ANNA *as she goes out door,* R. U. E.) Bring the lamp here.

(ANNA *takes the lamp off the wall and follows* JOSEFA *into the room,* R., *the door swinging to after her. The room is lighted by the fire and the light of the lantern which* MME. ANDROYA *has left on the table. The stage must be sufficiently light to see* MME. ANDROYA'S *face and movements clearly in what follows. She looks after the two women for a moment, puzzled, then makes a quick decision; hastily throws on her cloak and hat, and makes for the door,* C. *She tries to open it, it resists; tries it again, finds it locked, looks at it. She goes to the window, sees it is barred, and realizes she is a prisoner. She glances at room,* R., *on the*

watch for their return, then pulls paper out of the bosom of her dress, and looks about for a place to hide it.)

MME. A. (*under her breath*). It must go. (*She goes to fire and is about to drop it in—and turns, still watching door* R. *Her eyes fall on the lantern—the door of which is open—the candle burning—and drooping over to one side. An idea comes. She goes to lantern, and is about to lift the candle out, her eyes on door* R. *She stops. Takes up her cigarette case, which she has put down on the table earlier, and puts a cigarette between her lips, unlighted. Then, still on the watch for the women's return, she folds up the paper she has taken from her dress till it is about an inch wide, wraps it around the base of the candle, and replaces it, now straight, in the lantern. Almost before she is finished, the door,* R., *opens, whereupon she raises the lantern ostentatiously, and lights her cigarette at the candle as* JOSEFA *enters.* MME. ANDROYA, *in an unconcerned voice.*) My dear Josefa, a moment ago you urged me vehemently to start for home; you were most anxious for my safety.

JOS. So?

(JOSEFA'S *indecision is gone; her manner is insolent; in her own mind, she is mistress of the situation.*)

MME. A. But you had forgotten something. You had locked the door.

(JOSEFA *has sauntered to the door* C. *and put her back against it.*)

Jos. Well?

MME. A. And taken away the key.

Jos. (*coolly*). What's your hurry?

MME. A. (*affecting surprise*). Oh—then you've changed your mind!

Jos. About what?

MME. A. About my danger.

Jos. (*indifferently*). You should know best, if you're in danger; if there's something you're afraid of, something, for instance, (*Meaningly.*) that you don't want known?

MME. A. (*haughtily*). I don't understand you.

Jos. You had better understand. (*She comes nearer to* MME. ANDROYA.) Elizabeth Androya, there are others who would be less merciful than I. You are on your way to join your husband, because you have been warned. Your house will be attacked in a few hours' time.

MME. A. (*starting*). To-night?

Jos. Ah, you didn't know, then? Well, I won't stop you. You may go, just the same, but (*She touches* MME. ANDROYA'S *arm.* MME. ANDROYA *resents the touch and draws away a little.*) "Nothing for nothing." There's a condition.

MME. A. Payment. The Apostles of the New Freedom don't despise the old methods. In what form?

Jos. You want to return to your house. In a few hours it will be impossible. It will be in the hands of the people.

MME. A. It would not be the first time I have faced an angry mob.

Jos. Not one like this. It is known how you

have been employed. When the real issue comes, when the Government troops arrive, our men will be met, not by the machine-guns of the troops, only, but by guns and revolvers of their own townsfolk and neighbors—supplied by you.

(*A moment's silence.*)

MME. A. (*quietly smoking her cigarette*). I admit it. "The Right to Choose," "Freedom," aren't they your "slogans"?

JOS. I'm uneducated and rough, like the rest. I can't argue with you, but (*Savagely.*) when our men get control here, let the damned bourgeois and their friends, the sympathizers who have been wavering between us and you, look out for themselves. We want the names of the cowards who daren't stand by their own; the men who have gone back on us. Give me that list of traitors. (MME. ANDROYA *looks up sharply.*) That's what I want. I know you have one—never mind how. That's my condition. Give it up, then you can go.

MME. A. (*disdainfully*). All my life I have given orders. I cannot remember ever having threatened or bullied. You, because you have heard a vague rumor ——

JOS. You waste time in lying.

MME. A. Even were it true, an orderly from General Androya arrived this morning, and returned at once. By this time, (*She looks at her wrist-watch.*)—it will be, you can guess in whose hands.

JOS. (*with a smile*). I know.

MME. A. In my husband's.

JOS. In yours. "Tell General Androya I have many converts; I will bring the list of their names—with me."

(*The two women look at each other; a short pause.*)

MME. A. So; the faithful Anna takes my wages, and spies. You didn't tell me that when you begged me to take her in my service. You build the New Heaven and Earth with ugly tools. (*Decisively.*) Well, since you have taken my property by force, since my valise is already in your hands, since you've helped yourself—I'll borrow your lantern, and go. (*She takes up the lantern and moves to the door.*) Be good enough ——

JOS. Stop. (*She goes to door,* R., *opens it with her right hand, her eyes on* MME. ANDROYA, *and beckons. Then she crosses to, and leans against door* C., *watching* MME. ANDROYA'S *face.* ANNA *comes into the doorway,* R., *and stands there, an evil smile on her face, the valise hanging down, open and empty, in her right hand.*) You may take your valise. It is worthless.

MME. A. (*furious, seeing what they have done*). You have dared!

JOS. That surprises you, doesn't it! That a common peasant you thought you could twist round your finger should "dare"! We've lots of surprises for you people who are used to getting your own way. (*She snaps her fingers.*) You count for no more than any other woman. (*Slowly, with a malicious smile.*) The door will not be opened.

MME. A. (*controlling herself and speaking quietly*). By what right do you detain me?

JOS. Ideas of right and wrong are changing. You want to go? That roll of names—is the price.

MME. A. The men and women on that list are not for sale.

(JOSEFA *and* ANNA *exchange glances.*)

ANNA (*threatening*). Last week the Workmen's Council publicly flogged a woman of your class who defied them.

(MME. ANDROYA *is silent.*)

JOS. Are you going to let them search you? The wife of General Androya in the hands of rough peasants?

MME. A. Let them search; they will find nothing.

JOS. (*going to her*). Where is it, then? What have you done with it? I'll swear you brought it here. You fool—I have all the time I want. You have, at most—three hours. (MME. ANDROYA *quietly continues smoking.* JOSEFA *takes up the lantern and holds it out to* ANNA.) The carriage; search it.

(*As* ANNA *takes the lantern* MME. ANDROYA'S *eyes follow it; she watches with a curious look, then, with a little smile, resumes her cigarette.* JOSEFA *has unlocked the door;* ANNA *goes out.* JOSEFA *immediately closes and locks it after her, and puts the key back in her pocket. Di-*

rectly ANNA *is gone,* MME. ANDROYA *throws away her cigarette, drops her nonchalant manner, and turns with a quick, earnest appeal to* JOSEFA.)

MME. A. What is your motive? I came here because I trusted you. Your husband was in our employ all his life—his father before him. You belong here, as I do. What is your motive?

Jos. (*doggedly*). I stand by my people.

MME. A. Then see that your weapons are fair. If you had what you're so eager for, that list of names, what use would you make of it?

Jos. The Council deals with traitors.

MME. A. The Council!! Is it for them? Butchery! Massacre! Wholesale murder! For them! Are you willing to be their tool? What good has the "Council" done for you? What good will it ever do for you? There's not a woman on that Council, Josefa,—but there are women on that roll of names. You know how your "Council" deals with them! They would be the first to suffer. Not only they, but every woman, and every little child belonging to the men whose names are written there. The last outbreak—you know what happened then. The men were killed outright, but the women, and the little children ——! (*Pause.*) And it would be your doing this time. Would you ever be able to sleep? Would you dare close your eyes—for fear of what you would see? Haven't you learned, haven't you realized, there is a struggle within a struggle going on? That means more to you, and me, and Anna out there—(*Pointing off.*)—than any

issue of Governments, or Councils! Men, in Europe, are thinking only of men. Women are so many pawns—providers of material to fight their accursed "next war"—that is already on their lips! Women are being reckoned in terms of children only. Have you read Italy's new laws? France's? Enlightened France's? You mad woman, don't you see, won't you realize, unless women stamp out their suspicions and feuds, and link themselves together everywhere, they will live to regret it most bitterly? It is no time to side with this group, or that. Stand by the women. Stand by your own. The men have shown you the way, with their splendid sex-loyalty. Imitate it, beat them at their own game. War on war, till all the guns are silent, and the shell factories are dust heaps, and war is dead, killed by the workers—and the women. (*She watches;* JOSEFA *stands silent.*) Have you nothing to answer?

JOS. (*after a moment, lifts her head, moved but dogged*). Give me one thing, then—give me this. Rewards have been paid. A man, or men, have sold information to General Androya's staff; this much is known. I want their names. The rest (*Her voice trembles.*), because of the women, and the little ones, can go.

MME. A. You are sure? A man, or men, you say?

JOS. George Lerner—at least in his case we are sure.

MME. A. There are many motives for treachery. Revenge, hate, passion, greed. In the cases you say are known, which would it be?

Jos. (*turning, looking at her*). Why do you ask?

Mme. A. I'm curious—because, in one such case as you speak of, the information was offered to, and refused by—me.

Jos. You know the man.

(*Looking at* Mme. Androya.)

Mme. A. (*returning her look*). I know the—person.

Jos. (*eagerly*). Tell me ——

(*Before she can finish the sentence* Anna *knocks.* Josefa *goes to the door and lets her in, then stares anew at* Mme. Androya.)

Anna. There's nothing there. (*She puts lantern on table, and sees the two women looking at each other; asks quickly.*) What has she been saying? Have you got it out of her?

(*The tension is not broken by* Anna's *words;* Mme. Androya *and* Josefa *are still looking at each other.*)

Mme. A. (*quietly*). Think it over.

Anna (*impatiently*). Are you letting her throw dust in your eyes? (*She goes close to* Josefa *and pulls at her sleeve, and speaks hurriedly and low.*) Some of the comrades are at the house of Catharine Vassily, up the hill. She passed as I was searching. Anton Vorjak, and the brother of the man they shot, George Lerner's brother, Josef. Four or five are there. Let me fetch them.

(JOSEFA *hesitates, then pushes* ANNA *aside, and crosses to* MME. ANDROYA.)

Jos. I don't want to do it—I have no grudge against you—although you are Androya's wife. But you must give up the list, the names of those who are disloyal to us. If it is not upon you, then where are you hiding it?

MME. A. I refuse to say.

Jos. Our men won't take that answer.

MME. A. They must.

Jos. As God hears, you shall be forced to tell. There are comrades close at hand. If I keep you until they arrive, if I show them their enemy, the woman who has been among our people, poisoning their minds, bribing them, arming them, the wife of the man who gave the order for their comrades' death ——

MME. A. And my husband—what will you say to *him?*

Jos. Eh?

MME. A. You surely don't suppose he won't know! It will not be a pleasant end that will be meted out to you two! When it comes to horrible methods of doing people to death, our soldiers can quite match yours. White, or black, or yellow, men and armies are all alike—when the " beast " in them gets loose.

Jos. It's on my head, what comes of it. (*She turns to* ANNA.) Go to the house of Catharine Vassily. Tell the men that General Androya's wife is here, that she is guilty of supplying the people with arms to aid her husband's troops against us.

(*She hands the lantern to* ANNA.) When you have reached the house, hold this high. I shall see, from the window. (*She unlocks the door.* MME. ANDROYA *looks at the lantern, and at the women; then, her nerves at breaking point, gives way to hysterical laughter.*) Are you mad?

MME. A. I thank God, my last laugh is my best!

ANNA (*at door*). You spoke the truth, Elizabeth Androya, your last.

(JOSEFA *has been watching* MME. ANDROYA, *whose eyes are fixed on the lantern. As* ANNA *is almost out of the door,* JOSEFA'S *voice stops her.*)

Jos. Wait! Come back. (ANNA *turns.*) Close that door. (ANNA *obeys.*) That lantern; bring it here. Set it down. (ANNA *obeys.* MME. ANDROYA *makes a move towards it.*) Keep away. You laughed. Your eyes were on the lantern. Why?

ANNA (*staring at the lantern; suddenly*). The light! Look! There's something wrapped around it. Paper. See! (*She points.*)

Jos. (*taking her eyes off* MME. ANDROYA *for the first time*). I was right.

ANNA. It's there. The roll of names!

Jos. So, we can do without your help. The traitors who betrayed us—(*Exalted.*) as Sisera into the hands of Jael, delivered into my hands! (*She unfolds the paper, her hands tremble with excitement; after looking at it a moment, she holds it out to* ANNA.) Read.

(ANNA *takes the paper and deciphers it with growing bewilderment.*)

ANNA. "Take—three beetroots, 43—a pint of cream, 7—six eggs, 51—two cloves of garlic, 8—a large ——"

(JOSEFA *takes it out of* ANNA's *hand.*)

JOS. (*angrily*). What's all this rubbish?

MME. A. (*quietly*). A recipe.

THE TWO WOMEN. A recipe? What!

MME. A. For Bortsh! The General's favorite soup—A recipe for Bortsh. I congratulate you on your most brilliant discovery. A list, certainly, not of enemies—but ingredients, my clever, intelligent conspirators! You have it—make the most of it!

JOS. (*tearing it across and throwing it on the floor*). The trick won't help you. (*To* ANNA, *who is at the open door, looking out.*) What are you waiting for?

ANNA (*holding up her hand*). Listen! No need to go; our men are coming down the road. Do you hear?

(*There is a sound of horses' hoofs in the distance.*)

JOS. So much the better. (*She goes toward the door, but stops half-way and listens.*) But, (*A query in her voice.*) horses? (*To* ANNA.) Look out.

MME. A. (*with a little start, says softly to herself*). Horses!

JOS. (*to* ANNA). Do you see them?

ANNA (*watching*). Wait till they turn the bend.

JOS. (*doubtfully, to herself*). Lorries and cars, our men; but, horses?

ANNA. There must be quite a number.

MME. A. (*clasping her hands nervously, and speaking hardly above a whisper*). You hear them! You *do* hear them!

ANNA. They're riding fast.

(MME. ANDROYA *has gone to the window and caught hold of the bars in her effort to see out.* JOSEFA, *seeing her, snatches the wood-chopper off the wall, and stands threatening.*)

JOS. Keep away from those bars, or I'll break your wrist! (*All three are listening to the sound of the galloping horses, which comes nearer. To* ANNA.) Are they at the turn?

ANNA (*suddenly*). Here they come, now!

(*She is peering out into the darkness.*)

JOS. Open the door wide.

ANNA. They're stopping! Surely they're stopping!

JOS. (*surprised*). What can they be stopping here for?

MME. A. (*breathlessly*). Hadn't you better—see!

(*There is a clatter of hoofs, then a man's voice says, in a short, sharp tone of command, "Halt! Show a light!" There is a sudden flare outside, like a torch being lighted.* ANNA *draws back as if a bullet had gone by.*)

ANNA (*in a terrified scream*). God in Heaven! Government soldiers!

Jos. Who can have sent them?

Mme. A. (*her voice rising to a triumphant crescendo on the last words*). "Tell the General I'll bring the list, completed, when I meet his escort, at Oswald the blacksmith's house, at six o'clock tonight." (*Turning on* Anna.) You didn't hear the *last* words when you listened at the keyhole!

(Voice *outside, as before,* "*Dismount!*")

Anna (*her bluster gone, awed*). The master's escort!

Mme. A. (*mocking*). Yes—"the master's." How the "servant" comes out in you, my dear Anna! There will always be a master-class—of brains. (*As she goes to the door, the women fall back, cowed.*) Don't be afraid, I'll give neither of you away—for this very anxious half-hour! (*She calls outside.*) One moment, Lieutenant, and I'll be with you. (*She points to the two torn pieces of paper.*) Pick up that list of names.

(*The women stare from her to the pieces of paper on the floor.*)

Jos. (*faintly*). List—of names? That?

Mme. A. Of course. (Anna *sullenly stoops, lifts them, and holds them out.* Mme. Androya, *taking them, folds them and puts them in her dress.*) Have you never heard of a cipher? (Josefa *moves angrily.* Mme. Androya *points, warningly, to the door; there is a tiny sound of harness jingling.*) Till you have brains, dear friends, you won't shake us. (*Her manner becomes imperative, and she holds*

out her hand to ANNA.) Now, my pearls. (ANNA *hesitates. Warningly.*) Don't fear, I won't call in the soldiers. (*She waits;* ANNA *pulls out the handkerchief and gives it to* MME. ANDROYA, *who looks at them, and pockets them as she speaks.*) I can do better. I'll leave you to your friend, Josefa. Give her the news she's waiting for. News of her son. Tell her, through you, he was arrested, tried, (*She pauses.*) and shot—a week ago. Show her the money you were paid for it. Tell her to whom you gave the information. (*Mockingly.*) Women like you should not make enemies. (*Ironically.*) You forget how much my steward—" loved " you, my dear Anna! (*The sound of horses' hoofs breaks the tense silence.* MME. ANDROYA *calling outside.*) I'm coming now, Lieutenant. (*To* ANNA.) Don't be afraid! I won't call in the soldiers! I leave you to Josefa, to *his mother*—to explain!

(*She goes out.* ANNA, *rigid with terror, has backed against the wall,* R. *Her eyes never leave* JOSEFA'S *face, which is like stone. She stands quite still, her eyes, almost unseeing, looking through and beyond* ANNA, *only, her fingers pass slowly, automatically, along the edge of the wood-chopper, which she has never laid down. A man's voice, outside, not too near, says, sharply: " Forward! " A clatter of hoofs. As they die away the curtain quietly descends, shutting out the two motionless figures.*)

CURTAIN

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